



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
URBAN FORESTRY COMMITTEE
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR**

**Urban Forestry Committee Meeting
THURSDAY, MARCH 18, 2021 4:30PM
MINUTES**

Due to COVID-19 virus containment efforts, this meeting was held remotely.

A recording of the meeting can be accessed here:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/recording/2374225349601483266>

Meeting notes prepared by Jennifer Clifford & Vanessa Boukili

Committee Members in attendance: Althea Northcross (co-chair), Amy Mertl, Chris Dwan (co-chair), Conor Guidarelli, Henry Ayanna (left @ 6:30pm), Malik Drayton (ex-officio; Tree Warden designee), Vanessa Boukili (ex-officio; Senior Urban Forestry and Landscape Planner), Jennifer Clifford (arrived @ 4:37 pm), Tori Antonino (arrived @ 4:39pm)

Committee Members absent: none

Others in Attendance: Leah Grossman, Katherine England (DCR), Murphy Langevin, Philip Higonnet

Call to Order: Dwan called meeting to order at 4:35 pm followed by introductions

1. Introductions / Housekeeping

By UFC and residents in attendance

2. Resident Concerns











Dwan shares that a pair of lots on Cherry St were clear cut in March 2019 and replaced with gravel parking lot. This was done prior to the TPO going into effect and before UFC convened. Permit discussion going back and forth. Will renew commitment to TPO and strengthen. Will kick off this working group between now and April.

3. Mission of the Committee – Dwan suggests passing this item and move into Foss Park discussion; there is no objection

4. Tree Planting at Foss Park

DCR representative, Kate England updated the UFC about the DCR proposed planting plan.

Reminder: 5-6 were removed. Working with a DCR arborist, created replacement plan for 20-25 trees, where goal was to replace and also enhance. Worked with design team to come up with a plant list for street trees and difficult environment (because near McGrath highway and Rte 93). The proposal is for heartier plants along sides of park near heavy use roads in small protected area, a “tree grove” with birches and London plane coupled on the neighborhood side, tulip trees with Japanese stewartia and London planes as other aesthetically pleasing trees. They have attractive bark that is nice to view when within the park. Serviceberry and birches in mid-park as multi-leader trees (in the ‘grove’) which is near the near tennis court and benches. Eastern redbuds to be moved toward middle of park, honeylocust (hearty) near highway sides (because they can withstand the pollution pressure), and fruitless sweet gums. Species listed in the presentation are shown in Figure 1.

TREES	CODE	QTY	BOTANICAL / COMMON NAME	COMT	CALL
	BT	1	EXISTING TREE		
	AG2	1	Acer glabrum / Paperbark Maple	B & B	2.5' Cal
	AG	2	Amelanchier x grandiflora 'Autumn Brilliance' / Autumn Brilliance Apple Serviceberry	B & B	2' Cal
	BC	5	Betula nigra 'City Slicker' / City Slicker River Birch	B & B	2.5' Cal
	CC	3	Cercis canadensis / Eastern Redbud	B&B Single Stem	2.5' Cal
	GS	1	Gleditsia triacanthos 'Skyline' / Skyline Honey Locust	B & B	11-13' Cal
	LF	4	Liquidambar styraciflua 'JFS KWILS' TM / Firehouse Sweet Gum	B & B	11-13' Cal
	LE	4	Liriodendron tulipifera 'JFS-01' TM / Emerald City Tulip Poplar	B & B	11-13' Cal
	PL	2	Platanus x scabra / London Plane Tree	B & B	11-13' Cal
	SP	4	Stewartia pseudocornellii / Japanese Stewartia	B & B	21-23' Cal

fruitless?

TREE SPECIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE BASED ON QUALITY AND AVAILABILITY OF SPECIMENS.

0 1" = 40'

Figure 1. Tree species list for Foss Park replanting project.

Q&A

- Dwan - what about species selection? Is this appropriate?
 - Antonino - encourages prioritization for insects and wants more of a focus on native plantings, regardless of aesthetic value. Request to replace the London plane with oaks.
 - England - understands and wants to provide species that are interesting and unique to public park users. Park currently has lots of maple and oaks, and they want to bring biodiversity so can mix in some other species.
 - Guidarelli - other suggestions to utilize area to max native in the interior with tall growing trees; using fruiting variety of sweet gum may be preferred because they contribute to biodiversity. Can blow seed pods around tree and make a nice mulch ring that also looks good. Harsh salt conditions are challenge.
 - England - agreeable to include natives with faster growth and broader canopy. Some smaller trees can go on the Broadway side as long as doesn't interfere with under surface canal.
 - Guidarelli recommends use of witch hazel here (Mertl agrees)

- Mertl - concerned about air quality issues near the park. Can this be mitigated with trees? A thick layer of evergreens perhaps?
 - England - trees that are currently on McGrath highway side of park are in rough shape. DCR arborists will mostly remove these trees “value is there, but they don’t last long” Near the tennis court, 2 small trees have overgrown and they are dropping limbs, which is a safety and maintenance issue. She’d like to add evergreens or honeylocust to replace these.
 - Planting suggestions:
 - Antonino: pitch pine. Grows well along coast, although may not grow to full height. Arbor vitae?
 - Guidarelli: arbor vitae can be prone to desiccation, and suggests Eastern red cedar, which can be hedge-like. Keep in mind that these conifers will be subjected to salt spray, wind desiccation.
 - Grossman: perhaps American holly as hedge-like (not sure about salt tolerance), needled or broad-leaved evergreens, if planted densely could help with protection from pollution.
 - Northcross: small, evergreen shrubs and those that are dense, lower to the ground could make lasting impact, creating some kind of screen.
- Mertl/Northcross - mentioned clear walls that can be used to provide protection against air pollutants and mitigate particle distribution while allowing light.
- England - DCR is starting to look at resilience as a “now” problem and thinking about it more so hopes that the conversations get more to this aspect. She will take a list and suggestions. 25 trees is unusual for replanting, and expresses hope that this will become the norm.
- Boukili – Japanese stewartia and paperbark maple: we do not have either of these 2 species elsewhere in the city. We could take this opportunity to showcase these interesting trees to get the public interested in trees.
 - Tori: concerned about escape and thinks we need to always plant natives when presented with the chance.
 - 11 of the proposed trees are native and England/DCR can bump that up and aim for better balance between natives and non-natives
- Dwan – should we write up the suggestions and vote? A recommendation?
- Northcross– recommends sharing the list that we are working on and we can make that contribution. Boukili to share TPSS list with Kate England/DCR.

5. Updates from City

a. City Tree Removals (Boukili)

- i. Removals are progressing. Mark Lawhorne working through the 10-15 added in early March. Will send updated removal list; most are still from previous list. Also removing stumps, for total of 73. All are dead or hazardous. The biggest tree on the list is a 26” Norway maple at 30 Forest Ave.
- ii. Grossman - observed 2 young trees that were cut in half ~ 5ft stump remaining at Lincoln Park and Prospect Park (?).

Boukili - Some Lincoln Park trees were vandalized. In general, method of tree removal begins with top of tree first and then rest is removed later. Can take weeks or months to complete the removal. Usually 9” DBH or larger is handled by DPW. Other damage by vandals or storms.

- iii. Dwan – noted the tree near corner of Park and Somerville appears damaged/dead. Perhaps Bradford pear?

b. Private Tree Removal Permit(s) and Exception(s) (Drayton)

- i. Drayton shared permit applications spreadsheet.
- ii. 0 Boston Ave special case - MRWA has to maintain 60" for sewer, this requires removal of 3 trees: 24" Northern red oak, 13" American elm, 34" Northern red oak (for 71" total). Tress cannot be replanted. Now in mitigation: \$31,950 issued for TREE fund with permit to be issued once the check clears.
- iii. Drayton provided details on permits for 5 other addresses that have been issued or are pending, as well as exemptions for trees at 3 locations.
- iv. Boukili – this spreadsheet will be shared with all UFC members and updated regularly. Reminds group that this sheet will be accessible, but not editable – it is not to be shared publicly (due to privacy concerns), but can be used if any member of UFC is approached by a resident with concerns/questions on specific tree removal.
- Mertl - Can we recommend native species selection to those who are replacing?
 - Drayton – ensure that invasive are NOT planted, and assess suitability of species on replanting plants for each location.
 - Boukili - we do not have a list of species that we recommend, but could make one to distribute to private property owners to encourage (but not require) selection of native species.
 - Dwan - maybe build on top of UFMP as way to promote this info
 - Boukili – there is also the list for Green score zoning.

c. Urban Forest Management Plan (Boukili)

- i. The UFMP is moving along in graphic design stage. Goal is to complete before the April UFC meeting.
- ii. Dwan - Reminds the group that we (Somerville) are out in front with the development of a plan (compared to some of our closest regional neighbors).

6. Ongoing Work Updates

a. Arbor Day Planning

i. DCR 5th grader poster contest

- Clifford - 29 5th grade students from 3 Somerville schools submitted posters for the contest, which closed on March 15, 2021. Thanked all who helped with the judging. One winner from each school was chosen to have their poster submitted as part of the state-wide contest. Those posters were collected and handed off to a DCR representative. All posters are now on the UFC website, along with a blog that describes the contest.

ii. Adopt-a-Tree program

- Northcross putting together a working group and details are forthcoming. Briefly, need help with creating tree tags, lamination for the tags will be done at Somerville High School (at a cost). Funding will be through city; Boukili has other supplies. Revisit emails from last year, go through communication and data forms can be improved. A pictorial version of tree health form is started (healthy vs dead), this will be a community-facing form. Once trees on leaves may be easier to get data. **Action:** Looking for a mailchimp guru to lead that effort.

- Dwan - exploring with another group as to how to be most effective with accessibility and translation. Portuguese, Haitian Creole, and Spanish are desired. A small fee (a few hundred dollars) to get someone to do that professionally.
- Northcross – group was successful last year with translation for tags and forms, but not emails. We can focus on images for simple visual communication. But still need email communication; important to keep in mind whether reader is young/old/different levels of literacy/screen readers. Simplifying message is key.
- Boukili – not sure about getting funds for translation. Maybe next time include this as line item on the budget. Can also ask for volunteers to help translate and get people involved.

iii. ROOT (respecting our oldest trees) collaboration

- Northcross - leading a working group between ROOTS and UFC. Combined interest in forming resources to understand and value special trees (any special trees) and find areas to exhibit photos of our most admired trees. Arbor Day goal.
- Grossman - idea for photo exhibit to use existing images on a vinyl banner and tie to fence where folks are waiting for COVID vaccine.
- Northcross - Include an invitation to submit favorite or remarkable tree. Use form similar to that of DCR's program to recognize legacy trees; use this form to nominate a tree (including a photo). We can generate walking maps around the city from this data. ROOT already has a lot of documentation in place. Northcross showed a template of the map she started using info from Pacini's (ROOT) website. Will be an invitation to group to start sharing own special trees.
- Dwan - reminds him of 'Neighbor Ways'. Important in helping people connect, protect, and love trees.

b. GLX Corridor

- Antonino - reports Viola Augustin presented the previous night to Open Space committee. GLX appears to be 'no trees' and use hillside, restoration slope mix, including 'naturalized' grass. We can use shrubs. When vegetation is managed by MBTA they have to put out a Yearly Operational Plan (YOP). Would city weigh in? Deadline to weigh in is March 26. They will be using pesticides along the GLX corridor.
- Boukili (provides example) - YOP from Eversource for pruning requirement. Companies must notify Conservation Commission about herbicide use for areas close to water. City input on vegetation management is tricky because it is their land...how much can we say?
- Drayton - will check get any info before next meeting.
- Dwan - found MBTA management plan vegetation and shared via chat. All agreed to read and think about this.

c. Tree Species Selection and Planting Standards

- Antonino - shared invitation letter designed to contact developers and contractors. Noted: DLJ at Boynton Yards (lab building and open space) at Union Square; they should come meet with the UFC.
- Dwan – concerned about getting saturated with presentations.
- Guidarelli - impetus for generating this was based on disconnect for outside parties coming to us prior to getting construction plans approved. UFC is either on the tail end or maybe not involved at all. This form is used to reach out and indicate we are aware of their intent and encourage them to talk to us/share plans so UFC can provide resources. This is also a useful template.

- Boukili – suggests read and think about this document, then vote.
- Dwan - if we pre-approve the language can Boukili send out on our behalf? When we hear of project and need to nudge these communications along. Boukili first asks to read, digest, and then vote.
- Northcross – suggests the invitation letter is accompanied by a graphic one page idea of what the conversation will be (discussion flow), to help with expectations and productivity of the discussion.
- Dwan - proposes to put on agenda for next month, including one page graphic (Guidarelli)

d. Native Planting Ordinance

- It has been approved by subcommittee and is now awaiting full council vote.

6. Approval of Minutes from Previous Meetings (6:34 pm)

Call to vote to approve February 18th, 2020 meeting minutes:

1. Yay: Northcross, Mertl, Dwan, Guidarelli, Clifford, Boukili, Drayton, Antonino
2. Nay: none
3. Abstain: none

Adjourn: Motion to adjourn meeting unanimously approved at 6:34 pm [motion - Guidarelli, second - Antonino vote: 8:0:0]